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The town of Vernon is unique in Indiana in its geographical, architectural, and historical continuity. Its geographic boundaries remain virtually unchanged since 1815 when its founder, Colonel John Vawter, a professional United States surveyor, platted the town. Only a very competent surveyor could have centered this town on a peninsula surrounded on three sides by the north and south forks of the Muscatatuck River with only a narrow opening at the northeast and now leading to the city of North Vernon.

Vawter donated and set lots aside for the first public playground in Indiana, called "The Commons", located at the southwest end of town. The Commons is still functional. He also donated lots in the center of town for the Courthouse. The present courthouse was built in 1859 and is the seat of Jennings County. This magnificent structure was built of local burnt brick, local quarried, sawn stone from Vinegar Mill, and roof of imported 40 lb. tern (English tin) which still is on it. The three-story Courthouse has remained virtually unchanged with a few minor interior alterations. In 1955 a jail and Sheriff's headquarters were built adjoining the Courthouse.

The only drastic change to the original Vawter town map was that Jackson Street became State Highway 3 and 7 in 1937. Amazingly only one structure had to be moved. Zanas Kimberly built a wooden frame composite on the Jackson Street curve in 1824 (presently is known as "The Butternut Tree" house). This structure was moved north a few yards in 1937 when the State Highway was built.

The only other serious alteration to the continuity of Vernon was that a fire in 1859 destroyed the business buildings on Pike Street across from the Courthouse. Thus, the present eight buildings in the block were built in the 1870's, much later, than most of the historic structures of Vernon which were built in the 1830's and 1840's. These eight buildings are presently being used as a Post Office, County Extension Office, Zoning Office, grocery stores, and antique shops.

Not only has the scale and texture of Vernon remained unchanged but the richness and historic depth of its federal homes remain unspoiled by modern touches. One of the most charming streets in Vernon is Brown Street, six blocks of historic Hoosier heritage.

At the southern alpha of Brown Street is located the former home of John Vawter. This present home of Henry Poole contains within its outside walls the original two-story log cabin built by Vawter in 1815.

On Brown Street acrss from the Courthouse is a two-story wooden structure of unusual Greek Revival architecture. This present residence of Paul Dowell was built in 1880 and was once a wool carding mill.

On the corner of Brown and Pike Streets adjacent to the Courthouse is The North American House, an old tavern, inn, and stage coach stop on the pioneer Brownstown and Versailles Pike. This Connecticut federal style three-story building has had only one alteration: frame rooms were taken off the east side. Presently it is being used as a museum for "Our Heritage", a local historical society.

Across from the North American House are the "Rat Row" apartments built prior to 1849. These rectangular, Connecticut-type federal frames of white painted clapboard construction are representative of many wooden structures built in Vernon in the 1840's.

At the corner of Brown and Montgomery is one of Indiana's best examples of the federal architectural style. The homes of Dale Bentz, originally the home of Jacob Clinton (1834); Olin Armstrong, originally the home of Judge Hickman New (1832); Isabelle Dawson, originally the home of John Bassnett (1844); and Nolan Reese, originally the home of General Robert S. Foster (1840), are all in excellent condition.

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PAGE 2

Description Pg. 2 (continued)

Around the corner of Brown and Montgomery Streets is Arney's Garage. The Greek Revival architectural and the bell tower recall that this was once one of the first Christian churches built in Indiana (1838). Although the interior has been altered greatly, the only exterior change has been in the enlargement of the doorway. The church bell still remains in the tower.

As Brown Street intersects Highway 3 at its northern omega stands a simple one-story brick structure with only a small doorway in the center. It is the Methodist Church built in 1817.

Professional architects have identified the present Arthur Sears home as one of the most charming examples of Greek Revival architect in Indiana. This home was originally built in 1840, by Smith Vawter son of the founder of Varnon. The structure is located behind Vernon's only present industry - The Summer Furniture Company. The home is in excellent condition, and well-preserved by its owner, Arthur Sears. Its beauty is augmented by the original carriage house.

On the hill over-looking the courthouse on Washington Street are four more architectural styles. The Vernon Presbyterian Church, built in 1832, reveals an interesting Greek Reviwal style. The Griginal building had front doors on each, corners Today, it has a large front door in the center. The interior was paneled and redecorated in 1967. No other changes have been made.

Down the street the Baptists built an unusual structure of Italianate (Tuscan) design. The original church was built in 1824 but was replaced in 1871 by the present brick structure, which has remained virtually unchanged. A new doorway cut in the southwest corner (1946) and the original plain green window glass was replaced in 1950.

On the corner of Washington and Montgomery is a large brick two-story structure in composite style with Gothic influence accented by a double, vertical porch and balcony. This structure is now an apartment house. The lot was given to Vernon in 1815 by John Vawter for use as the Vernon Seminary. First mentioned as a school in 1822, this building also was used in 1858 as the meeting place of the Clionian Club, which claimed to be the first women's club in the United States. (The first women's club with a written constitution was founded at New Harmony, Indiana in 1859.)

On the opposite corner of Washington and Montgomery Streets stood the first brick house in Vernon built in 1820 and used as a parsonage for the Presbyterian Church.

At the southeastern edge of town stands a stone structure, the "gateway" to Vernon-the first elevated railroad andunderpass in the United States. This stone arch was at the end of the Madison & Indianapolis Railroad, which in 1832, extended from Madison to Vernon. Stone steps are still in place at the side of the arch. Many passengers used them in the 1830's on their way from the train to Branham's tavern, the North American House, and other commercial establishments on Pike Street.

The brick structure of federal style on Pike Street near the railroad arch was Branham's Tavern, built prior to 1839. In 1859 this structure was the site of a flour and woolen mill Today the structure is in its original condition with the exception of a welding shop added on the east side (1972). The building is being used now as a warehouse and welding shop for the Vernon Summer Furniture Company.

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PAGE 3

Description Pg. 3 (continued)

Of historic importance are the brick "Row" houses of general federal style located on State Highway 3 across from the Courthouse. These flat-front white brick structures were built prior to 1840 and once included J. L. Stott's hotel. "The Sherman House".

Later these structures had tunnels built into them by Alan Stott, who was active in the fugitive slave on the "underground railroad" which ran from Madison to Vernon. Slaves were brought up from the Muscatatuck River located behind the Sherman Houseeand were hidden in tunnels dug into the basements or under the floors in the structures. The "Row" houses are still the same except that the back sections have been remodeled and the smoke house in back is gone.

The home of Albert Edward Wiggam, a lecturer and writer, is a composite frame of white painted clapboard located on Brown Street and built in the 1840's. This house is not in the excellent condition of the surrounding federal homes but possesses historic importance.

In contrast, on the corner of Washington and Pike is a brick, federal structure unblemished by change since 1827. Today, it is owned by Chalmer Herr. It once was the residence of Phyllis Jackson, author of <u>Victorian Cinderella</u> and other books.

Traces of the Civil War still linger in the composite brick structure of the Vernon Normal School, built in 1860 on Perry Street across from the Courthouse. This was the headquarters for General Lew Wallace during Morgan's Raid in July of 1863.

The old Eberhart-Pabody home is located on a hill on the southern edge of Vernon near the Vernon Cemetary. This white frame structure of composite style is accented with wooden porch pillars in front. Here Henry Ward Beecher was a guest of Lucien Bingamin in 1845. A few years later another great preacher, Alexander Campbell, was also a guest there.

Across Highway 3 from the Courthouse a recent historic find was made. Mrs. Mary Hulse removed weather boarding and two coatings of asphalt siding and discovered a two-story log cabin. The log cabin is not restored in excellent condition inside and out. The cabin was built in 1819 by J.B. New and the lot was purchased from John Vawter, town founder.

At the southwestern edge of town on Washington Street near the north fork of the Muscatatuck River once stood an old tannery and a landing where flatboats were loaded after the dam at Tunnel Mill was built in 1825. Nothing remains today at these sites but the ruins of Tunnel Mill are quite visible.

Tunnel Mill was built in 1825 by Ebenzer Baldwin, south of Vernon directly across the Muscatatuck River from the Vernon Cemetary. Visible is the 150 feet long and 10 feet high tunnel which John Vawter blasted through soil and rock to the Muscatatuck River.

The foundation stones and the part of the chimney remain. Power for the wheel at the massive stone structure, 3½ stories high, was supplied by water from the Mascatatuck River flowing through the tunnel. Today the tunnel is dry and passable, attracting many students to its rich fossil content.

Wheat, corn and buckwheat were ground at the mill and shipped as far east as Pittsburgh and as far south as New Orleans. Later it became a paper mill. The stone foundation of a house on the hill west of the mill is also quite visible today.

This house, built in 1825, was a large double-log building with deep fireplaces at both ends. In the old brick ovens, bread, pies, and other foods were prepared for the farmers waiting their turn at Tunnel Mill, the biggest mill of its kind in southeastern Indiana in the 1830's.

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PAGE 4

Description Pg. 4 (continued)

In 1907 high waters weakened the structure and the east end gave away. Today, besides the dry tunnel, only the Mill's foundation and chimney base stones remain. The dam stones are still visible at the bottom of the river. Two of General John Hunt --- Morgan's raiders being killed nearby and were buried there. The woods nearby were described in Jessaymn West's book and movie, Friendly Persuasion.

Vinegar Mill is located on the northern edge of the Vernon district in Muscatatuck Park. This mill was the site of Indiana's first saw for sawing stone. Cut stone from this mill was used to build the present Vernon Courthouse and also the present Indiana State House. All that remains of Vinegar Mill are a few foundation stones at Indianapolis (1878-1888.)

The town of Vernon has 46 brick structures, 53 frame structures, five tile structures, one stone structure, one log cabin; and four mobile homes. The majority of the structures were built before 1900 and many date back to the 1830's. The architectural styles of federal, composite, Greek Revival, and Italianate blend into a historic mosaic.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The quaint little town of Vernon nestled between the forks of the Muscatatuck River has been spared many of the changes made in other communities. The exterior appearance of the structures has had very little alteration from the time Vernon was just being settled in 1815. The people of Vernon are proud of their heritage, their homes, and their history and their exceptional memerbal status.

Vernon was settled in 1815 by John Vawter, one year before Indiana became a State. John Vawter was a United States surveyor for a portion of the Northwest Territory. He contributed 77 lots and the Courthouse lot for the further development of Vernon. During Vawter's stay in Vernon he was Colonel of the Jennings County militia, a member of the State Legislature, pastor of the Vernon Baptist Church, and Editor and Publisher of Vernon's first newspaper, The Vernon Visitor.

Among the first settlers were Achilles Vawter, David McClure, and Joel Butler. Butler built the Vernon schoolhouse which served as a courtroom and church. Butler's son, Ovid, became the founder of Northwestern Christian University (now Butler University) at Indianapolis, Indiana.

Vernon is unique in that it has a special charter incorporating the town granted by the Indiana General Assembly in 1851. Elections are held every two years on the first Monday in March of the odd numbered year. Vernon also has a town marshal. No land can be annexed without approval of the State Legislature. Even though Vernon has a special charter, the town is still invested with all the powers and privileges pertaining to other corporate and political bodies in Indiana.

Vernon is a town of many first events. Vernon claims to have started America's first women's club in 1858, established the first Baptist Church in Jennings County, began one of the first Christian (Disciples of Christ) Churches in the state, held Indiana's first all-women jury trial on June 6, 1921, built the first elevated railroad in the United States, and had the first public playground in the Nation.

Vernon is also a town of homesteads. Several of the old homes are identified as the birthplaces of distinguished people. General Sandy Foster and Captain Wallace Foster, officers of the Civil War; John Goodnow, U.S. Minister to China, during the Boxer uprising. Lincoln Dixon, a member of the U.S. Congress; Alonzo Green Smith, former Indiana Attorney General; Sarah Bolton, pioneer poet; Albert Edward Wiggam and James Whitcomb Brougher, authors and graduates of Vernon High School; Shirley Dare, magazine writer; John C. New, U.S. Consul General to Great Britian and publisher of the Indianapolis Journal; Ovid Butler, founder of Butler University; Horatio Newcomb, Supreme Court Judge; Phyliss Jackson, author, and William Forsyth and Theodore Steele, famious Hoosier artists.

Famous people visited and lived in Vernon. Alexander Campbell, founder of the Christian Church and Bethany College, spoke at the Baptist Church. Henry Ward Beecher came to Vernon early in the Civil War and made a plea for Lincoln and the Union at the Courthouse. Lord Flanigan, English nobleman, was at one time a citizen of Vernon.

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Significance Pg. 2 (continued)

What is now Jordan's Funderal Home was the Vernon Normal School. A person could attend grade school for eight years and then take six weeks of training at the normal school to become eligible to teach school. The school was headquarters for General Lewis Wallace during Morgan's Raid in 1863. Wallace's troops were stationed in Muscatatuck County Park.

In July of 1863, John H. Morgan and 2,200 Confederate Cavalrymen crossed the Ohio River near Corydon and raided towns throughout Southern Indiana. Two of his objectives were to capture important railway centers in Vernon and North Vernon. As Morgan rode toward Vernon, bands of raiders roamed the countryside taking horses, saddles, guns, ammunition, food, and supplies.

Vernon had been notified of Morgan's coming. The County Militia and volunteers, totaling around 1,200, were positioned at various strategic points.

Hearing that some of Morgan's men were in the area, west of Tunnel Mill, militiamen went to the area and became engaged in a small skirmish. Two Confederates were killed. Morgan, believing Vernon was heavily guarded, retreated southward toward Dupont, Indiana.

Manufacturing played a large role in Vernon. In the 1830's the Hub and Spoke Company sent produce all over the nation. In 1826, there were a blacksmith, gunsmith, tanner and currier, hatter, saddler, brickmaker, tailor, millstone cutter, two bricklayers, two architects, and two shoemakers.

In Vernon there are many places of interest.

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As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Sovice. STATE HISTORIA PLANTAGE OF SECTION AND STATE HISTORIA PLANTAGE OF SECTION AND STATE HISTORIA PLANTAGE OF SECTION AND SECTION AND SECTION AND STATE HISTORIA PLANTAGE OF SECTION AND SECTION	
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boundary follows the south, west, and north lines around the mill ruins to the western edge of the tunnel leading north to the north bank of the river. The boundary follows the north and east Muscatatuck River bank in a west and north and west direction to the creek empting into the Muscatatuck River south and west of the Vinegar Mill site in Muscatatuck County Park. The boundary continues north up the creek to a point north of the Vinegar Mill site; from that point it follows a straight line to the northeast to join the northwest corner of the Vernon City limits.



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- North American House. Built in 1838. Old Tavern, Inn and Stage Coach stop. Now Antique Shop and Museum.
- 2. Old Mill. Built prior to 1839 as a depot for original Madison & Indianapolis Railroad and Branaham Tavern. Converted to flour and woolen mill 1859.
- 3. Kenneth Arney Res. Home of J.F. New and built prior to the railroad.
- 4. Madison & Indianapolis Railroad 1837. Now Pennsylvania Railroad. Arch and elevated track was first in nation.
- 5. Albert Cardinal Res. Home of the Batchelor family built before 1840.
- 6. Mary Gallatin & Alma Mortensen Res. Built prior to the railroad and was an early day school house.
- 7. Norman Cartwright Res. Formerly the Maquire home built prior to 1850.
- 8. Tom Semon Res. Built prior to 1840. Location of A. Leavitt & Co., Hub & Spoke Manufacturer.
- 9. Brick Warehouse of Vernon Summer Furniture Co. Built by John Vawter in 1820, used as a pork-packing establishment and later became a warehouse for Tunnel Mill.
- 10. Fred Biehle Res. Home of Lord Flanigan, early day English nobleman, built prior to the railroad.
- 11. Arthur Sears Res. Home of Smith Vawter built prior to 1840.
- 12. Lawrence Paight Res. Home of Uriah Wagner built prior to 1846.
- 13. Old Buildings at rear of log comprised foundry and manufacturing establishment of J.H. Wagner, Co., manufacturers of farm implements prior to moving to Indianapolis in 1901.
- 14. Church of Christ. Built by Methodist Church, organized in 1817.
- 15. Nolan Reese Res. Home of Gen. Foster and his brothers who were officers in the Civil War. Built prior to 1840.
- 16. Lewis Cheesebrew Res. Home of Albert Edward Wiggam, noted lecturer and author.



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Donn Bland

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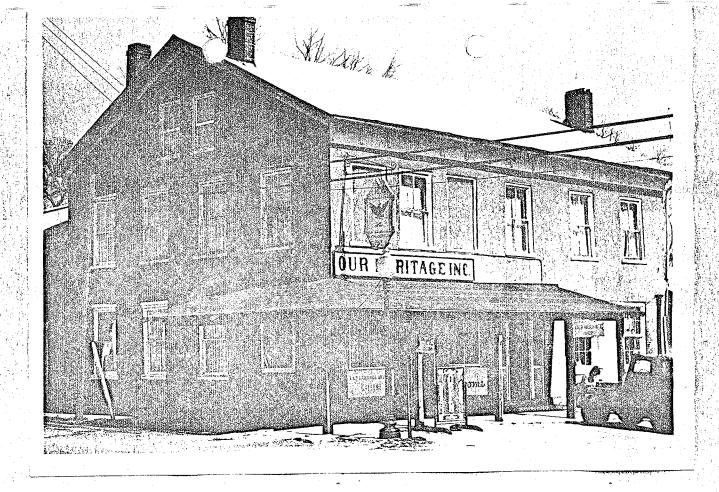
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View from the northeast facing the southwest.



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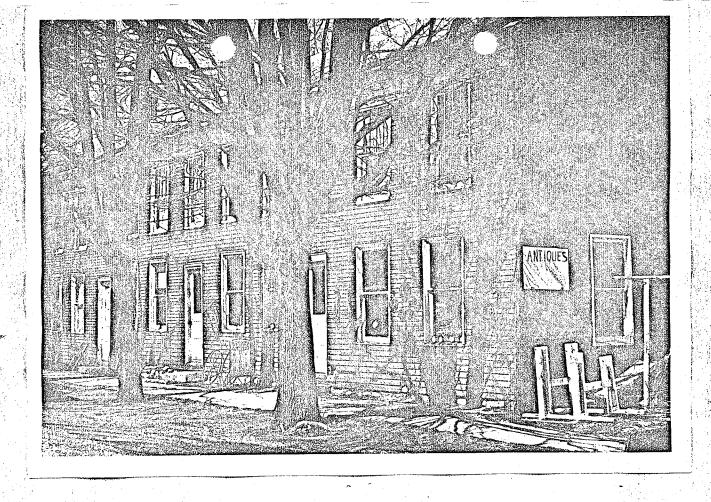
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PHOTO NO. 2

Photo was taken from the southwest facing northeast across the intersection of Brown and Pike Streets.

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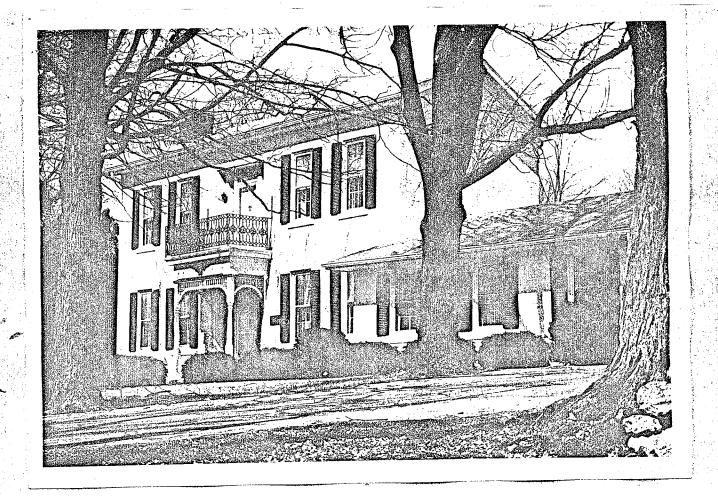
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РНОТО NO. 4

View from the southwest facing northeast in the middle of Brown Street



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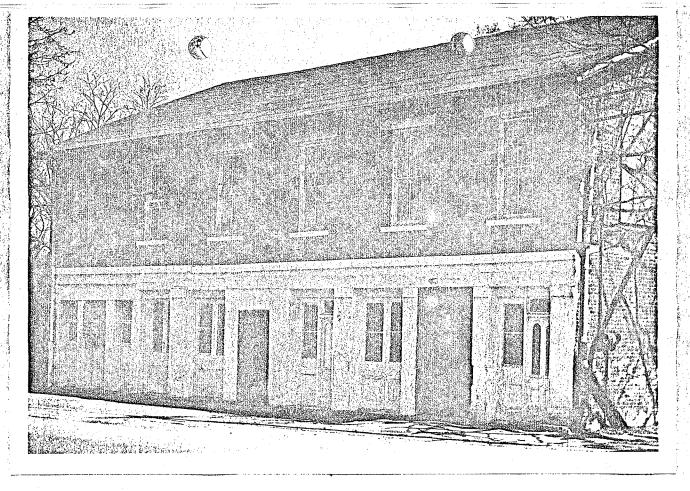
NEGATIVE FILED AT Jennings County High School, N. Vernon, Indiana

A IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

PHOTO NO.

Photo was taken from a southwest angle facing northeast. Not in this photo but nearby is an unique carriage house.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS

TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- LENCLOSE WITH PHOTOGRAPH

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Vernon Historic District

AND/OR COMMON

01d Mill and Branaham Tayern

2 LOCATION

CITY, TOWN

___VICINITY OF

COUNTY

STATE

Vernon

n

Jennings

Indiana

PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT

Donn Bland

DATE OF PHOTO 4-9-75

NEGATIVE FILED AT Jennings County High School, N. Vernon, Indiana

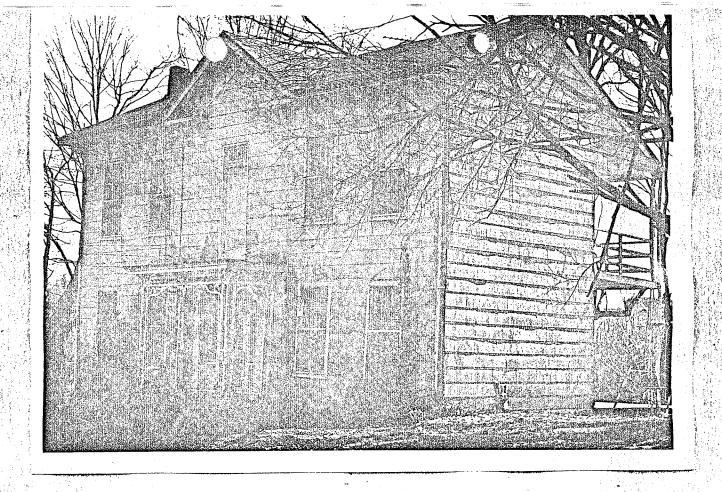
4 IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

PHOTO NO. 7

Photo was taken from the east facing the west in the middle of Pike St. This building is just north of the railroad underpass on Pike St.

INT: 2983-75



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

FOR NPS	USE ON	LY		
RECEIVED)			
DATE ENT	ERED			

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- ENCLOSE WITH PHOTOGRAPH

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Vernon Historic District

AND/OR COMMON

John Vawter Residence

2 LOCATION

CITY, TOWN

___VICINITY OF

COUNTY Jennings

state Indiana

PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT

Donn Bland

Vernon

DATE OF PHOTO 4-9-75

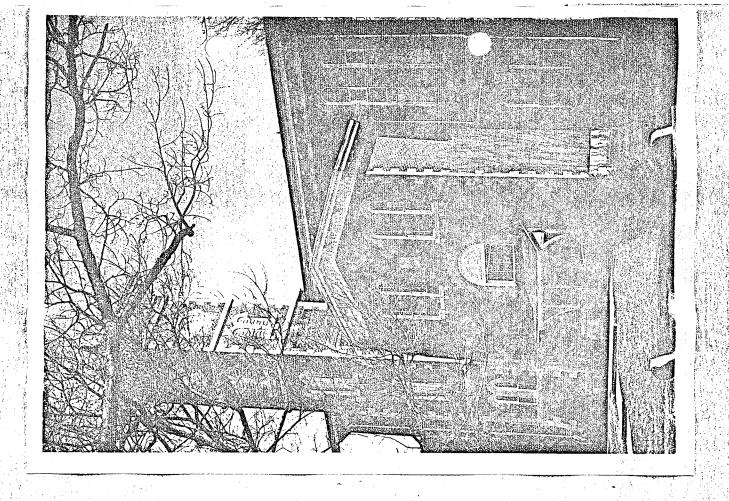
NEGATIVE FILED AT Jennings County High School, N. Vernon, Indiana

4 IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

РНОТО NO. 12

The photo was taken from the north facing south. Within the walls of this structure is a two story log cabin built in 1815.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

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DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- IENCLOSE WITH PHOTOGRAPH

i NAME

HISTORIC

Vernon Historic District

AND/OR COMMON

Jennings County Courthouse

2 LOCATION

CITY, TOWN

___VICINITY OF

county Jennings STATE Indiana

3 PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT

Donn Bland

Vernon

DATE OF PHOTO 4-9-75

NEGATIVE FILED AT Jennings County High School, N. Vernon, Indiana

4 IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

РНОТО NO. 15

This photo was taken from the east, across Pike Street, facing west at a slight northeast angle.

UNITED STATES DEPA MENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY MAP FORM

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE	INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW T	O COMP	LETE NA	TIONAL	REGISTER	FORMS
	TYPE ALL ENTRI	FS FN	CLOSE	A/ITH MA	P	

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Vernon Historic District

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

CITY, TOWN

__VICINITY OF

COUNTY

STATE

Vernon

Jennings

Indiana

3 MAP REFERENCE

SOURCE Hand drawn from 1884 Atlas of Jennings County Map

SCALE

 $1^{n} = 200^{n}$

DATE 3-12-75

4 REQUIREMENTS

TO BEINCLUDED ON ALL MAPS

- 1. PROPERTY BOUNDARIES
- 2. NORTH ARROW
- 3. UTM REFERENCES

INT: 2986-75